

JUMP SHOT HOW-TO: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOES NOT WORK

By Robert Tilitz

The whole-body jump shots are athletic, powerful and controllable. The whole-body jump shots are easy to learn and easy to execute because they are powered by the coordination of big-muscle jump shot techniques and controlled by the shooting hand.

All of the several different whole-body jump shots are superior to the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot, which is widely supported in the NBA. The elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's problems start with its out-front, horizontally extended, basket-aligned and shoulders-squared-to-the basket setup, which makes the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot stiff and awkward. In large part because of its stiff and awkward setup, the jump and overall athleticism of the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot is minimal. Little to no jump means little to no strongside off-the-dribble pull-up capability. That's because the strongside moves and run-ups that create separation from the defender also generate horizontal momentum that must be harnessed. That's a very much unrecognized job of the jump of the jump shot, which, besides elevating the release, should harness the preceding horizontal momentum by redirecting it upward. Little to no jump means needing to slow down to manage separation momentum, defeating its purpose.

The elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot has release problems too. For example, the strokesnap release consists of only a forearm stroke and a wrist snap, so it is starved for power and, as a result, often overworked and difficult to control. Furthermore, the direction of the strokesnap release is difficult to adjust because the basket-aligned shooting elbow and the squared-to-the basket shoulders setup form an inflexible right-angle construction. The resulting inability to make the adjustments that action jump shots inevitably require has surely contributed to the mass migration of elbow-in-strokesnap shooters to stationary, standing-start 3-point land.

By contrast, the whole-body techniques athleticize the jump shot. First, the arm action that raises the basketball to the shooting position for the start of the release also helps to power the jump of the jump shot. Second, because of whole-body jump shot's the close-to or over the body shooting positions, the shooting shoulder automatically rolls back to activate as source of whole body athleticism and whole-body power via engagement with the release mechanism. Third, the forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release merges the jump with the release by channeling the athleticism and the power of the jump into the release. Fourth, the forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release largely powers the rotation of the square-in-the-air jump that many strongside pull-up jump shots require and all could use.

For power, the whole-body release techniques consist of forward rotation of the shooting shoulder, along with a full extension of the shooting arm including a stretched-out forearm stroke. The whole-body jump shots also rely on supplemental power production techniques derived from either the jump or subsequent body leverage. The resulting abundant power makes whole-body jump shots easy to shoot and therefore easy to control. The forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release also plays a big part in gun-turret adjustability.

The whole-body jump shots put the shooting hand in control of the jump shot. The shooting hand controls direction by leading the extension of the shooting arm straight into the arc of the jump shot and toward the basket. The shooting hand starts the release from an underneath half hand shooting grip. The shooting hand should be bent back during most of the extension of the shooting arm. Near the end of the extension of the shooting arm, the shooting hand should brush

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the basketball in order to fine-tune distance, generate backspin for touch and soften the shot by slowing its velocity. The brushing hand action by the shooting hand looks like a super smooth wrist snap, but it is actually the whole-body jump shot theory's replacement for the wrist snap.

There are two types of full-scale shooting-shoulder-centric whole-body jump shots. One is the forward-oriented elbow-out jump shot with a straight-up or forward jump (e.g., Bernard King and Reggie Miller). Setting up the shooting grip with the shooting hand angled in automatically angles the shooting elbow out. The elbow-out jump shot's release starts from a forehead-high or higher, close-in-front shooting position. Setting up the shooting position with the shooting elbow angled out automatically rolls the shooting shoulder back. The elbow-out jump shot's release is an on-the-rise, one-motion, no-reachback straightstroke-push.

The other full-scale shooting-shoulder-centric whole-body jump shot is the laterally-oriented reachback jump shot with a fallaway jump. The reachback jump shot's shooting position sets up forehead-high or higher and one hand length back past the front of the head. The reachback automatically rolls the shooting shoulder back, which allows the shooting elbow to angle either in (e.g., Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant) or out (e.g., Tim Hardaway and Michael Redd). The reachback generates backward momentum that partly powers a fallaway jump. The reachback also bends the upper body back at the waist as the legs angle forward for balance. The reachback release in combination with body leverage reverses the fallaway jump, pulls the upper body forward and returns the legs underneath the body for a safe landing. The reachback jump shot's release is a top-of-the-jump, leveraged straightstroke-pull.

When the shooting grip for the whole-body jump shot sets up with the shooting hand angled in, which angles the shooting elbow out, the subsequent hand action that brushes the basketball has a neatly balanced precision. At the moment of release, the inherently uneven middle finger and ring finger of the shooting hand line up with their fingertips and fingerpads parallel to the ground and equidistant from the basket. As a result, the ends of the middle finger and the ring finger are positioned to become the shooting hand's built-in and precisely gauged sight and range finder.

When the shooting grip for the whole-body jump shot sets up with the shooting hand aligned with the basket, which angles the shooting elbow in, the subsequent hand action is also aligned with the basket. The aligned hand action uses one finger or a combination of fingers as primary runners or rails to brush the basketball and to guide it toward the basket. The recommendation here is the middle finger and the ring finger together (e.g., Larry Bird and Chuck Person) because they form a sturdy, centrally located combination.

Besides being the best overall jump shots, the whole-body jump shots are also a perfect fit for strongside pull-ups. That's because the forward rotation of the shooting shoulder partly powers the release and largely powers the rotation of the square-in-the-air jump. With the ability to square in the air after an action stop, whole-body jumpshooters can run into the strongside pull up intent on beating the defender, not on slowing down to square up on the ground. Although the whole-body jump shots excel at all weakside jump shots, their most important ability by far is the ability to attack with the strongside pull-up jump shot.

